

Hearing Statement in response to the Planning Inspector's questions:
Matters 21 and 22
Submitted by N Hamilton

In regards to the matters you have raised, query 21.1 – has the revised OAN figure for North Hertfordshire been arrived at correctly/on a robust basis ... I would answer no, it does not appear to have been arrived at correctly. The ORS seems to have contradicted itself – it has used the 10 year trend data for its calculations even though in its own account it has stated that international migration into North Hertfordshire is low – therefore why has the low migrant variant of the ONS not been used for the calculations? I have seen data submitted by other respondents, such as Save Our Green Belt and personally feel that their calculations are much closer to the mark and the figures should be investigated further.

In regards to Luton; the ONS states a 3.4% decrease in the population over the next 10 years, there are numerous empty properties and Central Beds Council have included 7,400 in their plan for the unmet housing need of Luton. NHDC mentioned figure for Luton's unmet housing as 9,300 – this was then updated to 8,200. Surely if CBC are incorporating 7,400 properties within their plan for Luton's unmet housing – that leaves 800 properties that would need to be picked up by NHDC, not 1,400? Things really do not seem to be adding up.

In regards to the question 22.1 b) about whether housing sites should be reduced – my answer would be yes most definitely. The first sites that should be re-considered are those that offer significant contribution to the green belt purposes. As you are aware, I raised a number of times during previous hearings the situation regarding how many sites were proposed on green belt land and how many were on brownfield sites – a brownfield register wasn't produced by NHDC until much later in the process. I have recently seen spreadsheets of land owned by NHDC and am wondering why more effort was not made in to locating sites on brownfield land; I still have not seen evidence of empty homes within North Hertfordshire.

The recent pandemic highlighted just how important green spaces are around our towns and the importance of the green belt. The unmet need of Luton needs to be re-addressed, the OAN needs to be re-considered and the local plan's unjustified housing numbers need to be examined. We are living in a climate of the unknown, migration has reduced and we have Brexit looming – we need to do the right thing in regards to this local plan for the residents of North Hertfordshire.

16th September 2020